

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 /065 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1945

INFO PANCANAL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - TORRIJOS DENIES "POST" STORY

SUMMARY: TORRIJOS HAS DENIED MAY 17 "WASHINGTON POST" STORY THAT HE WAS PREPARING TO ACCEPT U.S. POSITION ON NEUTRALITY. GOP OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE SAYS PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS RECEIVED "PRECISE INSTRUCTIONS" THAT INCLUDED COMPLETE "DECOLONIZATION" BY DECEMBER 31, 1999, AND A CONCEPT OF NEUTRALITY THEREAFTER IN WHICH ONLY PANAMANIAN TROOPS WOULD DEFEND THE CANAL. END SUMMARY.

1. STORY BY MARLISE SIMONS IN MAY 17 "WASHINGTON POST" QUOTED TORRIJOS AS PREPARING TO ACCEPT U.S. POSITION ON NEUTRALITY IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. MS. SIMONS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT STORY WAS BASED ON WHAT TORRIJOS SAID TO HER DURING A THREE-DAY STAY AT FARALLON MAY 13-16. EFE WIRE ITEM ON "POST" STORY WAS BANNERED HERE BY AFTERNOON "REPUBLICA" MAY 17.

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2. LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTS 1800 MAY 17

CARRIED AN INTERVIEW QUOTING TORRIJOS AS CATEGORICALLY DENYING THE "POST" STORY. HE WAS SURPRISED THAT "A SERIOUS NEWSPAPER LIKE THE WASHINGTON POST PUT INTO MY MOUTH WHAT I HAVE NOT SAID." HE HAD SAID NONE OF THE THINGS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, "...NOT ONLY ABOUT PANAMA AND THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT WITH REGARD

TO THE REFERENCES TO OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, SUCH AS THOSE WHICH ARE OUR NEAR NEIGHBORS OR THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE SOUTHERN CONE." HE ALLEGED THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN RECEIVED ANY REPORTER FROM THE "WASHINGTON POST" RECENTLY. (FBIS/PANAMA PA 180026Y).

3. TORRIJOS' DENIAL WAS LEAD STORY IN ALL MAY 18 MORNING PANAMA CITY PAPERS. "ESTRELLA ACCOMPANIED THE DENIAL WITH A FULL REPRINT OF THE "POST" ARTICLE.

4. EVENING TELEVISION NEWSCASTS MAY 17 ALSO BROADCAST AN OFFICIAL GOP COMMUNIQUE DESCRIBING RECENT TRAVEL OF PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS AND AMBASSADOR TO U.S. GABRIEL LEWIS. THIS SAID THE TEAM WAS RETURNING TO WASHINGTON WITH "PRECISE INSTRUCTIONS" ISSUED BY TORRIJOS AT 0230 MAY 17 AFTER CONSULTATIONS INCLUDING MANY TOP GOP AND GN LEADERS. THESE PROVIDED THAT: 1) "THE PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION WHICH WILL BEGIN THE DAY FOLLOWING THE APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT WILL END ON DECEMBER 31, 1999. BY THAT TIME ALL TERRITORY AND INSTALLATIONS OF THE CANAL ZONE, INCLUDING THE CANAL ITSELF, SHOULD BE PHYSICALLY AND CONCRETELY IN THE HANDS OF PANAMA"; AND 2) "THE NEUTRALITY CONCEPT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD IN THE SENSE THAT PANAMANIAN TERRITORY MUST STOP BEING A POTENTIAL STRATEGIC TARGET IN THE EVENT OF WARLIKE CONFLICTS OF ANY NATURE AND OF ANY MAGNITUDE... BY DECEMBER 31, 1999 NOT ONE SINGLE FOREIGN SOLDIER SHOULD BE LEFT IN THE PANAMANIAN TERRITORY CALLED THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CANAL ZONE. AND ONLY PANAMANIAN TROOPS WILL DEFEND THE PANAMA CANAL." (FBIS/PANAMA PA 170034Y).

5. THERE HAS BEEN NO OTHER COMMENTARY ON EITHER ASPECT OF THIS STORY THROUGH MORNING PRESS MAY 18.

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY AND USIS, AFTER TALKING TO "POST" REPORTER, ACCEPT THAT HER ARTICLE ACCURATELY QUOTED TORRIJOS. SHE SAID HE EXPLICITLY TOLD HER THAT NOTHING, OTHER THAN PERSONAL MATTERS, WAS OFF THE RECORD. HIS PROMPT AND STRONG PUBLIC DENIAL DOES NOT SURPRISE US. OMAR IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF TALKING UNINHIBITEDLY WITHOUT REALIZING WHAT HIS WORDS WILL LOOK LIKE IN PRINT AND THEN TRYING TO RETRACT THOSE WORDS WHEN THEY COME BACK TO HAUNT HIM. END COMMENT.
GONZALEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: N/A
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2470682
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - TORRIJOS DENIES "POST" STORY SUMMARY: TORRIJOS HAS DENIED MAY 17 "WASHINGTON POST" STORY THAT HE WAS PREPARING TO ACCEPT U.S. POSITIO
TAGS: PFOR, PN, US, WASHINGTON POST, (TORRIJOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
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